

Coffee

A PLAY IN TEN MINUTES

— by Rick Butts —



Two guys in the warehouse would **kill for a good cup of coffee.**
Face to face with Blitzen, they may have to.

COFFEE

A play in ten minutes

by

Rick Butts

An obsession with coffee leads to clouded judgement.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FREDDIE, a warehouse worker who loves coffee.

CHUCK, a warehouse worker who loves coffee.

BLITZEN, a toy reindeer about the size of a small teddy bear.

Roles may be cast with actors of any race and any vocal characteristics.

SCENE

On the right, a table with two chairs where two warehouse workers take their breaks. Two coffee mugs sit on the table. A few feet away on the left, the boss' office with a grey metal desk and chair facing the "door" out to the break table. A metal file cabinet is upstage centre near the desk. A small toy reindeer sits on the file cabinet with a view of the desk. Unseen offstage right, a coffee station brews cups of coffee with company-supplied coffee pods.

TIME

Now.

SYNOPSIS

Freddie and Chuck are hunting for the boss's secret stash of great coffee. Driven by Freddie's unbridled ambition and tempered by Chuck's commitment to kindness to toy animals, the duo inevitably find themselves at the threshold to the place that may hold the answers they seek. They must enter the boss's office and come face-to-face with Blitzen, the toy reindeer who guards the secrets of great coffee.

BLITZEN as prerecorded, voice-over or live from off-stage

BLITZEN is a toy reindeer that silently guards the boss's office and only engages with FREDDIE and CHUCK when they inadvertently wake her. Like the audience, FREDDIE and CHUCK are unaware that BLITZEN contains a camera and a microphone with the ability to record audio and video and transfer files to the company's network Cloud storage.

For stage purposes, a simple toy reindeer will do. BLITZEN's lines can be prerecorded and delivered on cue or simply spoken by an actor from an off-stage position with a mic.

The fun part of BLITZEN's character is that the audience doesn't know about her surveillance capabilities until later in the play.

SETTING: The break table in the warehouse outside the boss's office.

AT RISE: Two warehouse workers in overalls CHUCK and FREDDIE sit at the table drinking bad coffee. CHUCK wears an orange helmet. FREDDIE has a hockey team toque pulled down low over his ears.

(In the distance, the sounds of trucks backing up, then a loud crash of something hitting the floor.)

CHUCK

Freddie! No! Don't say it!

FREDDIE

(Shouts at someone in the distance.)

Yeah, we'll get that.

CHUCK

Now? We just sat down.

FREDDIE

Later.

CHUCK

We got a thousand pallets to load and wrap.

FREDDIE

Later.

CHUCK

And a hundred trucks coming in.

FREDDIE

Don't worry.

CHUCK

I worry.

FREDDIE

Don't worry. The forklift's down.

CHUCK

Again? We can't do anything without the forklift.

FREDDIE

My point exactly. Wait for it.

(Sound of door slamming off-stage.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Boss is gone. Forklift's down. Now you got all day to sit and finish your coffee.

CHUCK

Is he really gone for the day?

FREDDIE

He's at the dentist. That's his story. Says it might be all day.

CHUCK

All day at the dentist?

FREDDIE

Yup. Getting a wisdom tooth pulled. Good luck finding one.

CHUCK

(Sipping coffee, choking.)

I'd kill for a good cup of coffee.

FREDDIE

You smell *his* coffee? I'd kill *him* for that stuff.

CHUCK

I don't know if I can take another sip.

FREDDIE

If you pinch your nose closed, you get it down without smelling it. Take a big gulp.

CHUCK

What's wrong with your forklift?

FREDDIE

Oopsie! Looks like someone forgot to plug it in overnight.

CHUCK

It'll take hours to charge.

FREDDIE

Exactly. We can't do much without the forklift. So sit back and enjoy your coffee.

CHUCK

I wish we had his coffee.

FREDDIE

You can smell him coming at a hundred feet.

CHUCK

I know it's him when he's five racks over in bidets and sanitary drains.

FREDDIE

He's hoarding the good stuff, you know.

CHUCK

We searched every rack in the warehouse for his coffee stash!

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss' office.)

We haven't searched *everywhere*.

CHUCK

No! We can't go in there.

FREDDIE

It's not fair. It shouldn't be allowed. He's got the good stuff in there.

CHUCK

We can't search his office. We'll get fired if he finds out.

FREDDIE

You went into the dumpster for his used pods. You said yourself, it's not fair.

CHUCK

You said that. But you're right, it isn't fair.

FREDDIE

What do you think of his coffee?

CHUCK

I dream about it. Complex. Smoky. Nutty. A hint of floral. A fruity finish.

FREDDIE

And our coffee?

CHUCK

Fermented cat thingy. I have nightmares about it.

FREDDIE

There's only one coffee station. When *we* brew, we get crap-in-a-cup. *He* brews and it's coffee to die for. Where are his used pods? Gone. Like they never existed.

CHUCK

It's a good thing I get up at night to pee. It wakes me out of the nightmares. Last night there's a decapitated head of a giant coffee pod on my pillow. Probably a dream.

FREDDIE

It's probably too much coffee before bed.

CHUCK

It's too much *crap* coffee all day at the warehouse!

FREDDIE

(Gesturing at the boss's office.)

So what are we going to do about it? The good stuff. It's probably all there in his office. From where I sit, you've got a chance to stand up for the little guy, Chuck

CHUCK

Why am I the little guy here? I'm bigger than him.

FREDDIE

It's a metaphor. His office is calling to you, little guy. The door's open. He's gone for the day. It's time to stop being a big baby and be the little guy. Against the man.

CHUCK

We're drinking CRAP-puccino!

FREDDIE

We are. His office awaits. You got this, Chuck. One small step for a man. And you're in.

CHUCK

Why me?

FREDDIE

Somebody's got to be the look-out.

CHUCK

Like you were the look-out last time?

FREDDIE

Ya gotta let that go. It's not healthy to obsess. I didn't see the raccoon going in after you. Maybe you shouldn't have been wearing headphones while dumpster diving.

CHUCK

I was on break. Listening to a podcast. My time. Break time is my time.

FREDDIE

I warned you. Banged "dum da-da-da-dum dum" on the lid so you'd know it was a raccoon attack. They can be territorial.

CHUCK

Territorial? He bit me!

FREDDIE

Okay, no one's fault. Just saying that if you go into a dumpster for the cause, you can certainly walk into the boss's office for a little look-see.

CHUCK

He bit me *twice*. Not once. Twice. That demonstrates malice! NO WAY I'M GOING IN!

FREDDIE

His office is there. You owe it to yourself to confront your fears. It'll help you overcome your self loathing. Forgive yourself for the raccoon thing. I'll keep watch from over here.

CHUCK

NOPE. NOT GOING IN. NO WAY!

FREDDIE

Searching the boss's office will let you feel good about yourself. Get over the trauma.
(Beat. Takes a big swig of his coffee. Grimaces.)

Fine. I'll go in.

(FREDDIE goes into the office. CHUCK follows.)

CHUCK

Don't call me a baby. And I'm not staying out here by myself.

FREDDIE

(Looking around the office.)

Bosses sure do get nice offices. Big window. Big desk. Big chair. With wheels and everything—

CHUCK

(Sees BLITZEN the reindeer on the file cabinet. Picks it up.)

A Christmas ornament? Why keep something from Christmas around all year?

FREDDIE

Really? You're asking me? I don't know. It's weird. I came in one morning early and found him talking to it like it's a pet bird. Calls it Blitzen.

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

You hear that?

CHUCK

Uh huh? Uh huh.

FREDDIE

You heard *un huh* twice?

CHUCK

No. Once. I heard *uh huh* once. I was saying *uh huh* to you that I heard *uh huh*.

FREDDIE

Who said uh huh first?

CHUCK

(Points to BLITZEN.)

That!

FREDDIE

Give it here.

(CHUCK passes BLITZEN to FREDDIE who punches it.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Ok reindeer, talk.

CHUCK

Freddie, her eyes. They flashed.

FREDDIE

Chuck, you're seeing things. I'm poking her eyes. They're not flashing.

CHUCK

Give her back. Stop hurting her.

FREDDIE

It's probably one of those talking toys. You press a button somewhere and it says stuff.
(To BLITZEN. Louder.)

BOO ya filthy cari-BOO! Should I give you back to Uncle Chuck so he can pull your antlers off—

CHUCK

No! Uncle Chuck would never hurt her—

FREDDIE

(He bangs BLITZEN's head on the desk.)

Maybe if I kill you you'll talk.

CHUCK

Stop it! Don't kill her!

FREDDIE

(Holds BLITZEN up to his face.)

We can't have this reindeer being a rat and telling the boss that Freddie forgot to plug in the forklift on purpose.

CHUCK

She won't be a rat!

(CHUCK takes BLITZEN from FREDDIE, puts her on the file cabinet.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

(To BLITZEN. Soothing voice.)

You sit there quiet. No one's going to hurt you, Blitzen.

BLITZEN

Uh huh.

FREDDIE

Did you touch the button again?

CHUCK

No.

FREDDIE

(Nervously sits down in the boss's chair, rocking.)

Leave it alone. We got work to do. Search everywhere. I'll check out the boss's chair.

CHUCK

(Goes to the window downstage.)

Look at the size of this window. You can see the whole parking lot.

(Long pause while he stares at something. Suddenly alarmed.)

Freddie! His parking spot! He's still there in his car!

FREDDIE

Get out of the window! Down!

(CHUCK dives to the floor.)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

What's he doing?

CHUCK

(On the floor, crawls frantically to the door right.)

I can't see. I'm on the floor.

FREDDIE

Get up. Wait. Stay down. Now look out. But not when he's looking back.

CHUCK

(On his knees, peeking out.)

He's stopped at receiving.

FREDDIE

Oh my God. He forgot something. He's coming back. We better get out of here—

(Starts to run to the door right.)

CHUCK

Freddie, stop!

(FREDDIE freezes, stands in front of the window.)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I mean stop because he's out of his car and looking at his window.

(FREDDIE drops down with a thud and crawls around in circles. He bumps the file cabinet hard.)

CHUCK

Freddie, careful. Don't knock Blitzen!

BLITZEN

Have either of you fallen? Do you need me to call 911? Or just sound a very shrill annoying siren that will bring everyone in the building to your assistance?

(Short blast of emergency alarm.)

FREDDIE

(Makes the shssh sign to CHUCK. Whispers.)

Don't tell her anyone's here.

CHUCK

(Nods, makes the thumbs up sign to FREDDIE. Whispers.)

Blitzen, thank you for asking. No one's here.

BLITZEN

Okay Chuck. Is Freddie really okay? He sounds a little stressed.

(A car horn goes *beep-beep* in the parking lot.)

CHUCK

No he's fine. He's just kneeling to avoid detection by the boss.

FREDDIE

What's happening outside!

CHUCK

It's MARIE! He's picking up MARIE from receiving. She's getting into his car.

FREDDIE

(Crawls to the other side of the window.)

MARIE! The hottie! You know what this means?

CHUCK

She has the same dentist?

FREDDIE

No! She's the missing link!

CHUCK

Fine. Missing link. Who woulda thought? What are the chances? She's the missing link Can I get up now? My knees are killing me.

FREDDIE

Get up. But stay down. What's happening now?

CHUCK

(Stands with his back downstage on one side of the window.)

They're gone. You can get up.

FREDDIE

Marie? She's hired last month? By the boss. She's hot. She's into coffee. It's obvious.

CHUCK

She's into hot coffee?

FREDDIE

Chuck, work with me here. They're doing flirty-flirty from day one. He's drinking the crap coffee we drink. Suddenly he's drinking the good stuff. She's got the *same* coffee!?

CHUCK

The other day, I thought it was the boss in flex drains. I could smell his coffee over the rubber. I swing in and it's Marie! At the four-inch corrugated. Drinking the boss's coffee!

FREDDIE

She's the Eve of plumbing supply. This changes everything. We need a new plan.

CHUCK

Yeah. New plan So what's the plan?

FREDDIE

New plan later. For now, we need to find out the name of the coffee they're bringing in.

BLITZEN

Lat-a-luv Beans Cream Royal Chocolate Espresso Yourself.

CHUCK

It's a sign from God.

FREDDIE

No. It's that undercover caribou. Blitzen.

(Points to BLITZEN on the file cabinet.)

BLITZEN

(Wild laughter before speaking.)

Uh huh. You guys should see your faces. By the way, could you remind the boss it's time to re-order his coffee? It's in the bottom drawer of the file cabinet.

FREDDIE

She's a talking camera. Oh CRAP-puccino!

BLITZEN

Not just a camera, Freddie. In addition to 4K video, I have full audio capabilities. Time and date stamp on everything I record. There's nothing I miss.

FREDDIE

Up to our eyeballs in reindeer doo-doo without a doggie bag.

BLITZEN

Do either of you have an SD card with you? You boys have been so active, I've reached the maximum recording time I have available for this movie we've been making together.

FREDDIE

No. No SD card.

BLITZEN

No problem. I will need to delete the files for the last hour and start recording over again. All the material we've recorded will be erased permanently from my memory.

BLITZEN

Freddie. Chuck. You still there? Should I erase everything and start over?

FREDDIE and CHUCK TOGETHER

Yes please!

BLITZEN

Freddie, please look into my eyes so I can authenticate you.

(FREDDIE holds BLITZEN up to his face.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

Thank you Freddie. Now Chuck, your turn please. Smile.

(CHUCK holds BLITZEN up to his face.)

BLITZEN (CONT'D)

Done. All the recordings of our time together are now uploaded to the Cloud.

CHUCK

That's great! All gone. In a Cloud.

(END OF PLAY)

PRODUCTION NOTE

This play is meant to be accessible to groups with minimal set design capabilities. Consequently, reasonable substitutions may be made as stage furniture and props are intended to help story-telling not create barriers to production.

CHUCK notices that BLITZEN's eyes flash. If the effect can be created, it's helpful but not critical as long as the actor "sees" BLITZEN's eyes flash on cue.

This play can work on a simple set as actors "create" doors and windows (see sketch).

